



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MS-13 GANG MEMBERS ARRESTED BY ICE IN PROVIDENCE

Crimes committed include vandalism, breaking and entering, and malicious destruction of property

PROVIDENCE, RI—Special agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested two members of the violent “Mara Salvatrucha” (MS-13) gang Tuesday night in Providence.

Jose Alvarado, a 25-year-old citizen of El Salvador, and Carlos Cerna, a 20-year-old citizen of Mexico were both arrested and charged with immigration violations. Both men are admitted members of MS-13 and are in the U.S. illegally. Alvarado was recently convicted of breaking and entering in Tanton, MA. His criminal history also includes arrests for vandalism, malicious destruction of property and multiple arrests for disorderly conduct.

“Violent street gangs threaten the safety of our communities,” said Robin M. Avers, special agent-in-charge of ICE in New England. “ICE will continue to work with law enforcement partners to remove illegal alien gang members from our streets and our country.”

The arrests of Alvarado and Cerna are the latest in Rhode Island under Operation Community Shield, an ICE national anti-gang initiative launched in March to target members of the MS-13. To date, ICE agents, working with federal, state and local law enforcement partners have arrested more than 300 MS-13 members nationwide.

Operation Community Shield is designed to disrupt and dismantle violent gang organizations and prosecute their members by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available to ICE. To accomplish this, ICE is employing its broad immigration authorities, both criminal and administrative, while at the same time, using its customs authorities to target narcotics smuggling and money laundering and to seek the forfeiture of assets.

Operation Community Shield draws on strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. Locally, ICE has partnered with the Providence Police Department and the FBI in Rhode Island.

ICE has also taken several new steps to help other federal, state, and local agencies identify and target gang members. ICE's Law Enforcement support Center (LESC) in Vermont is playing a critical role in this effort. The center is running MS-13 gang member data provided by state and local law enforcement agencies through various ICE and Homeland Security databases to help these agencies identify and locate violent gang members.

ICE will also be working through its 54 Attaché offices overseas to cooperate with foreign governments that are also experiencing gang problems, particularly those in Central America.

Alvarado and Cerna are in ICE custody awaiting the outcome of their cases.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.